

HWMR: CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF MATTHEW 5 THROUGH 7 (Week 6)

Being Perfect as Our Heavenly Father Is Perfect

Scripture Reading: *Matt. 5:20, 44-45, 48; John 3:16a; Eph. 5:29; 1 John 4:8, 16; Rev. 19:7*

- Matt. 5:20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness **surpasses** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt. 5:44 But I say to you, **Love** your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,
- Matt. 5:45 So that you may become **sons of your Father** who is in the heavens, because He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.
- Matt. 5:48 You therefore shall be **perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect**.
- John 3:16 **For God so loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.
- Eph. 5:29 For **no one ever hated his own flesh**, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because **God is love**.
- 1 John 4:16 And we know and have believed the **love which God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.**
- Rev. 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give

Day 1

*Matt. 5:44-45 - ...I say to you, **Love** your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father who is in the heavens...*

*Matt. 5:48 - You therefore shall be **perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect**.*

I. “You therefore shall be **perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”—Matt. 5:48:**

- A. We are the **Father’s children**, having the **Father’s divine life and divine nature**; hence, we can be **perfect as our Father is perfect**:
1. The **divine life** can make us **perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect**.
 2. We have this **perfecting life within us**.
 3. We need to **turn to our Father** and realize that we have His life and nature.
 4. In this way we will be **perfect as our heavenly Father**.
 5. This is the kingdom life, the kingdom living.
 6. The way to be perfect is to **remain in the divine fellowship** to receive and enjoy continually the dispensing of the processed Triune God—v. 48.
 7. Since we are sons of the heavenly Father **possessing His life and nature**, it is logical that we, His sons, should be perfect even as He is perfect.
 8. In order for us to be perfect in this way, we need to **enjoy the dispensing** of the divine life and nature into us by enjoying the Father Himself—2 Cor. 3:6a.

Matthew 5:48 says, “*You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” To be perfect here is not to be perfect according to the Mosaic law. If the Lord Jesus merely said, “*You therefore shall be perfect,*” we would be finished and would have to give up, but we praise the Lord that this verse does not end there. Instead, it goes on to say, “*As your heavenly Father is perfect.*” This shows us **the way that we can be perfect**. This is the way we can keep not only the Old Testament law but even the New Testament law instituted by the Lord Himself. The way is **by our becoming the children of God, by God becoming our Father**. That God is our Father indicates that we possess His life and His nature with His essence and divine supply. By this supply we can keep the uplifted law in the New Testament. Only God Himself can keep His own law. Surely this must make us happy and grateful. Actually, even when He gave the Mosaic law, He knew that the children of Israel would not be able to keep it. The purpose of giving them that law was to expose that they could never keep that law. When they received the law, they should have immediately said, “Jehovah, thank You for this law, but none of us can keep it. You must help us.” If they had confessed their inability to keep the law, they would have been on their way to salvation. In the New Testament we have been given a surpassing law. (*The Ministry of the Word vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 6*)

Eventually, the Lord Jesus said, “*You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (5:48). He did not say that we should be perfect as a gentleman but **perfect as our heavenly Father**. How is this possible? It is impossible unless **we have the Father’s life**. If someone asked us to be perfect as a little lamb that is meek and gentle, we would have to say that it is impossible, because we do not have a lamb’s life. In order to be perfect as a lamb, we would need the life of a lamb. Then being meek and gentle would be no problem. In the same way, it is impossible for us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect unless we have His life. (*The Kingdom, Chapter 6*)

Day 2

*Eph. 4:12-13 - For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the **building up of the Body of Christ**, until we all arrive at the **oneness of the faith** and of the **full knowledge** of the Son of God, at a **full-grown man**, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

- B. Ephesians 4 is a chapter that speaks of the perfecting of the new man through the **growth in life**; the new man created by Christ **must be perfected in order to function**:
1. The organically perfect new man needs to be perfected through the growth in life in order to function in a proper way:
 - a. The new man can become perfect in relation to his function only through **receiving the proper nourishment**; this is one of the deepest concepts in the book of Ephesians.
 - b. We should all fulfill our responsibility to perfect the new man through **nourishing and cherishing**—5:29.
 2. In order to be perfected, we need to be **constituted with Christ** (Col. 3:10-11); this means that as the all-inclusive Christ is wrought into us to be our everything, the organically perfect new man becomes perfect functionally.
 3. When the new man is perfected, that will be the time for the Lord’s coming, and the **perfected new man will be the bride**—Rev. 19:7.

Since we are sons of the heavenly Father possessing His life and nature, it is logical that we, His sons, should be perfect even as He is perfect. **We have a perfect Father.** Certainly, **as His sons, we should likewise be perfect.** We are His offspring, His duplication, and His extension. God's full salvation is to make us perfect, not in a way of having a so-called sinless perfection. Actually, the meaning of perfect in Greek is not to be flawless but to **arrive at maturity and completion.** Day by day, we are becoming fully developed, becoming more and more perfect as the Father is perfect. Hence, we need constant dealings with the Lord.

Ephesians 4 is a chapter that speaks of the perfecting of the new man through the growth in life; the new man created by Christ must be perfected in order to function. We are the new man, we have a new heart and a new spirit, and we have the divine life and nature; however, **we are still in the process of being perfected** as the new man in an ultimate and final sense. This process is simply the process of growth in life, which is the increase of God's element in our being. The **more Christ grows in us, the more God grows in us.** The more we grow with the growth of God, the more the new man, which was created by Christ on the cross two thousand years ago, is perfected. The new man is being perfected in order to also function. The new man functions, acts, according to God and in oneness with Him. (The Ministry of the Word, vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 6)

Day 3

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.

1 John 4:10 - Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins.

II. For the kingdom people to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect means that they are **perfect in His love**—Matt. 5:20, 44-45:

- A. The **divine love** is the **nature of God's essence**; thus, it is an essential attribute of God:
 1. "**God so loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—John 3:16a:
 - a. Although we are fallen, **God still loves us** with His divine love, which is Him-self (1 John 4:8, 16), because we are vessels created by God according to His own image to contain Himself (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 9:21a, 23).
 - b. **God so loves us** that He gave His only begotten Son, His expression, that we might obtain His eternal life.
 2. "**Herein is love**, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins"—1 John 4:10:
 - a. In this fact is the higher and nobler love of God.
 - b. The divine love as God's essential attribute is mainly **expressed in sending His Son** to redeem us and impart God's life into us so that we may become His children.
 3. "God, being rich in mercy, because of **His great love** with which He loved us"—Eph. 2:4:
 - a. God loves us because we are the **object of His selection.**
 - b. Because of His great love, God is rich in mercy to save us from our wretched position into a condition that is **suitable for His love.**
 - c. The nobler love of God as His essential attribute needs His attribute of mercy to reach us in the deep pit of our fallen life.

- B. “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us”—Rom. 5:5b:
1. The love of God is **God Himself**—1 John 4:8, 16.
 2. God as love is the **divine essence** that has been poured out into our hearts—Rom. 5:5:
 - a. The pouring out of the love of God into our hearts is a matter of the essence of God.
 - b. Because we have been **regenerated, we have love** as the nature of God’s essence **within us**.
 - c. As believers, deep in our hearts we have something of the divine essence, and this is **God the Father in His love**—Matt. 18:35.
 3. Because the love of God has been poured into our hearts, the **heart of a believer in Christ is a heart of love**—Eph. 3:17.
 4. In our experience and enjoyment of God as the Father in His love, we experience and enjoy the dispensing of love as the nature of God’s essence **into our hearts**—Rom. 5:5, 8; 8:35, 39; 15:30; 2 Cor. 13:14.

The divine love is the nature of God’s essence; thus, it is an essential attribute of God. We have received the divine life and nature, and the nature refers to the nature of God’s essence. The nature of God’s essence is **simply the love of God**. God is love. The divine love, the love of God, is the nature of God’s essence, and it is an essential attribute of God.

If we study this carefully, we will see that although Matthew 5 through 7 apparently is not mainly about love, **love is the spirit of all the commandments**, including the Old Testament commandments. We should honor our father and mother because we love them. If one commits murder, it is because he hated that person and did not love him. We do not steal from those whom we love. Not committing adultery means that we love our spouse. Love is the essence of the law. We may have the concept that the law is merely about dos and don’ts. With more study and the help from the ministry, we will see that the kingdom is about love. All the commandments are a matter of love, and to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect is to be **perfect as He is according to His nature, His essence, and His attributes**. (*The Ministry of the Word, vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 6*)

Day 4

1 Cor. 12:31 - But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And moreover I show to you a most excellent way.

1 Cor. 13:13 - Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Day 5

Eph. 1:4-5 - Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, predestinating us unto son-ship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

- C. First Corinthians 12:31—13:8 reveals that **love is the most excellent way** for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ:
1. Love is the inward essence of God and the **heart of God**—1 John 4:16.
 2. God is love; we love because **He first loved us**—vv. 8, 19.

3. God's predestination of us unto the divine sonship was **motivated by the divine love**—Eph. 1:4-5.
4. God first loved us in that He **infused us with His love** and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the saints—1 John 4:19-21.
5. The life that we have received from God is a **life of love**.
6. Christ lived in this world **a life of God as love**, and He is now our life so that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is—3:14; 4:17; 5:1.
7. We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ; the divine **love should be like a rushing tide of great waters toward us**, impelling us to live to Him beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14.
8. We are God's species because we have been **born of Him to have His life and nature**—John 3:5-7:
 - a. We have been regenerated to be **God's species, God's kind**, and God is love—vv. 3, 5; 1 John 4:16.
 - b. Since through regeneration we have become God in His life and nature, we also are love; this means that we do not merely love others but that **we are love itself**—John 1:13; 13:34.
 - c. As God's species, **we are love because God is love**—1 John 4:8.

Day 6

*1 John 4:17-18 - In this has **love been perfected with us**, that we may have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as **He is**, so also are we in this world. There is **no fear in love**, but **perfect love casts out fear** because fear has punishment, and he who fears has not been perfected in love.*

- D. First John 4 tells the secret of how to **stand boldly before the judgment seat of Christ**—v. 17:
 1. To abide in love is to live a life in which we love Christ—**abide in love**—vv. 17-18; 2 Cor. 5:10, 14.
 2. To abide in love is to live a life in which we **love others habitually** with the love that is God Himself so that He may be expressed in us—1 John 4:16.
 3. Perfect love is the **love that has been perfected in us** by our loving others with the love of God; such love **casts out fear** and **has no fear** of being punished by the Lord at His coming back—vv. 17-18; cf. Luke 12:46-47.

In our experience and enjoyment of God as the Father in His love, we experience and enjoy the dispensing of love as the nature of God's essence **into our hearts**. We may say that the Christian life and the kingdom life is just to love. When a lawyer asked the Lord, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matt. 22:36), the Lord said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (v. 37). Verse 38 says, "This is the great and first commandment." In other words, the great commandment is to love, **particularly to love God**, not to do this or that. This is much more so in the New Testament. If we do not love God, there is no way to keep the higher law seen in Matthew 5 through 7. If we can try to keep these commandments without the essence of love, we are merely good, ethical, law-abiding, and commandment-keeping Christians.

In 22:39 through 40 the Lord went on to say, “*And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*” All the commandments hang on this **love**. Our love for man is **based on the first love, the love for God**. We have no love in ourselves. We can love our neighbors only with the love that God has loved us, the love that God has poured out in our hearts. In Matthew 5 the Lord’s requirement went beyond that of loving our neighbor to that of loving our enemies: “I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you” (v. 44). In ourselves we do not have a love that can love our enemies, those who persecute us, and those who hate us. However, now the **divine love has been poured out into our heart**. This means that if we live Christ and enjoy His life, we can love not only our neighbor but also our enemies. By this love we can also forgive as the Lord forgives. On the cross the Lord Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). To forgive as the Lord did is humanly impossible. **The only way is with the love of God**. The only way is with the love that is so clearly displayed on the cross by the Lord Jesus Himself. (*The Ministry of the Word, vol. 29, No. 10, chapter 6*)